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ABSTRACT

Results of a study of students enrolling at Germanna Community College (GCC) between fall 1981 and fall 1986 to compare the persistence and graduation rates of transfer and occupational-technical students are presented in this document. The study was limited to full-time, first-time students with a declared major. Major findings of the study are as follows: (1) nearly 25% of all students were no longer enrolled by the end of their first term, and 50% dropped out by the end of or following their first year; (2) 75% were neither enrolled nor graduated by the end of the study; (3) persistence rates were nearly identical for transfer and occupational-vocational students; (4) less than 30% had graduated by fall 1986, and approximately 15% completed graduation requirements within the nominal two years; and (5) occupational-technical students tended to reflect a higher graduation rate than transfer students, though year-to-year fluctuations were considerable. (JMC)

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PERSISTENCE AND GRADUATION RATES AT GERMANNA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Fall Quarter 1981
Through
Fall Quarter 1986

Prepared by:

Institutional Research Office
April 10, 1990

JC 900 283

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study was limited to full-time, first-time, curriculum-placed students who enrolled from 1981 through 1986.

Both transfer and occupational-technical students persisted well beyond two years. Nearly one-quarter of all students were no longer enrolled by the end of their first semester or quarter and one-half dropped out by the end of their first year. Three-quarters were neither enrolled nor graduated by the end of this study. Persistence rates for transfer students and occupational-technical students were nearly the same.

Less than thirty per cent had graduated by the end of this study. Approximately fifteen per cent completed graduation requirements within the nominal two years. An additional ten per cent required a third year. Graduation rates tapered off significantly after three years. Occupational-technical students tended to reflect a higher graduation rate than transfer students although year-to-year fluctuations were considerable.

INTRODUCTION

In a recent study by Dr. Don Puyear[1], the persistence and graduation rates of first-time, full-time degree students were examined. In this investigation, rates for transfer and occupational-technical students were compared. The findings of this study represented information about VCCS students which had not been available previously.

Puyears's findings were not college specific which prompted the question "How closely do Germanna students parallel the patterns of the VCCS?". To obtain data about Germanna students, Dr. Earl McHewitt, Research Coordinator in the Research and Planning Section of the VCCS System Office, was contacted. Dr. McHewitt provided the raw data applicable to Germanna.

Since the data provided by Dr. McHewitt was a subset of that used in the Puyear study, the same qualifications were applicable. Students enrolling in fall, 1981 through fall, 1986 were tracked through each subsequent term (fall and spring quarters were used prior to the conversion to semesters) through spring, 1989. While only full-time enrollees were selected for initial enrollment, no

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[1] Puyear, Don, Persistence and Graduation Rates of Full-Time Degree Students Enrolling for the First Time in the Fall Quarter 1981 through the Fall Quarter 1986, Virginia community College System, Richmond, Virginia, January, 1990.

distinction was made between full-time and part-time enrollment in succeeding terms nor whether the student retained the same major.

FINDINGS

On average, about seventy-five per cent of Germanna students returned the spring term following their first term as shown in Graph 1. This represented a five percentage points improvement over the VCCS average. Second year (fall) returnees averaged about fifty-five per cent which matched the VCCS rate. Similarly, the fourth term (spring) persistence rate for Germanna approximated forty-five per cent which, again, matched VCCS.

Germanna experienced an improved persistence rate in both fall to spring and spring to fall retention for the 1985 and 1986 cohorts. VCCS rates followed the same pattern. This finding lends support to the decision to switch to a semester system.

A comparison of transfer students to occupational-technical students, as shown in Graphs 2 through 7 and in Table 1, indicated nearly identical persistence rates with the two programs tending to alternate their relative position every other year. Although the number of students was small, thereby allowing small changes in absolute numbers to provide fairly large percentage changes, it was interesting to note that the occupational-technical students in the 1984 cohort held a measurable margin over transfer students

in fall, 1988, and spring 1989. The graphs present the relative similarity of the two student groups.

With such similarity between transfer and occupational-technical students, the two groups were combined with little loss of accuracy. Approximately one-half of the students in this study remained enrolled in the spring of their second year. About twenty-five per cent were still enrolled in the spring of their third year and fifteen per cent remained in the fourth year.

Hence, it is safe to state that one-half of the students required more than two years to complete degree requirements as was also found by Puyear. This does not mean that one-half will graduate in two years. In fact, based on the findings, only between twenty-five and thirty per cent of Germanna's students will ever graduate, a slightly higher rate than in the Puyear study.

The conclusion of a Germanna student's second year was marked by graduation about thirteen per cent of the time (Table 2). Graph 8 shows the per cent of graduates per year over a six year period. Germanna's rate was substantially higher than the VCCS average of ten per cent. Likewise, by the end of the third year about twenty-three per cent of Germanna students had graduated; a mark still somewhat above the VCCS calculation of about twenty per cent. It is important to note Germanna percentages are based on a total population ranging from 93 in 1985 to 160 in 1981. Individual year

enrollments are shown in each of the tables.

The 1983 cohort proved to be the exception for Germanna with just under eight per cent graduating in their second year and less than nine per cent in their third and fourth years. For the VCCS, the 1982 cohort produced an unexplained increase in the number of graduates. Germanna did not experience this increase.

Graduation rates for the 1981 through 1986 cohorts are shown for transfer students and occupational-technical students in Graphs 9 through 14. For each cohort except one, 1985, the rate for occupational-technical students was higher than for transfer students. In particular, the 1986 cohort shows a differential of almost eighteen percentage points. The reason for this margin is unknown at this time.

Since the VCCS moved from the quarter system to the semester system in the summer of 1988, it does not appear that such a move should have impacted the 1988 graduates unless there was a concerted effort to complete graduation requirements before the conversion took place. Further, why transfer students should be so much lower is also unknown. The 22.73 per cent rate for occupational-technical students in the 1986 cohort was not the highest; 1984 was 2.27 percentage points higher. Of special interest but unexplained is why transfer students dropped to 6.85 per cent in 1988, the lowest of either group in any of the years

studied.

A lower rate for transfer students may be partially explained by the fact that transfer students may consider the baccalaureate degree as their principal objective. Hence, once the courses necessary for transfer have been completed, the community college has served its purpose. The need for the associate degree may be considered as less important than the need to move on to the four year institution.

Graph 15, titled "Lost Students", and the related Table 3, "Retention Data", show rather clearly that about fifty per cent of Germanna's students were lost after the first year. Lost is defined as students not returning and not graduating. Theoretically, no students should be graduating at the end of year one. At the end of the second year about sixty per cent were in the lost category and, after the third year, approximately sixty-six per cent had neither graduated nor returned. The 1986 cohort reached nearly eighty per cent, the highest of all six years. However, Germanna's overall average of about seventy per cent nearly parallelled that of VCCS.

CONCLUSIONS

Additional study appears necessary to determine why students leave Germanna without graduating. With persistence rates quite

comparable to those of the VCCS, Germanna can claim to be only average in its ability to retain students. The alarming feature of this study is the loss of seventy per cent of those students who entered Germanna as new, full-time students with a declared major. Such students provide the nucleus around which major programs are designed. Hence, these findings are of major importance to those who influence the development of major programs and to those who establish entrance criteria and provide guidance to incoming students.

Some specific questions raised by the finding of this study include:

- Is a seventy per cent student loss rate acceptable to Germanna?
- Do the incoming students, e.g., the 1986 cohort of 117 first-time, full-time, degree students, represent a fair market share for Germanna?
- Are students adequately evaluated in terms of the demands of their selected curriculums?
- Are there other predictors of success which the College should be using?

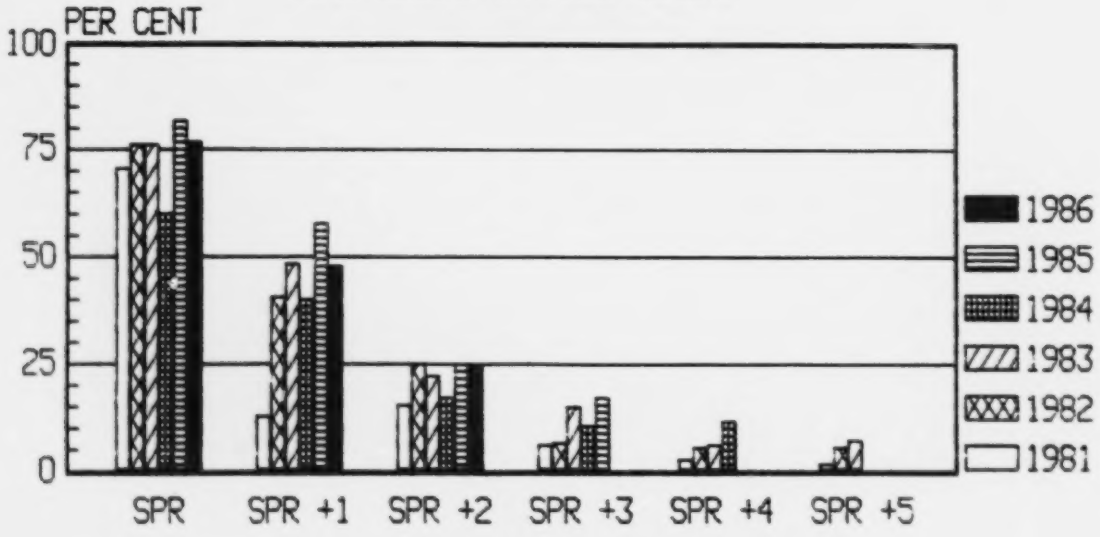
- Are the demands of the College's curriculums adequately communicated to students?

- Is it possible to determine why students leave without graduating?

- To what degree are student expectations satisfied at Germanna?

Several of these questions are already under discussion at Germanna as part of the assessment process. Considering the magnitude of the retention problem, it seems reasonable that this should become a principal focal point as the College moves toward its third decade of service.

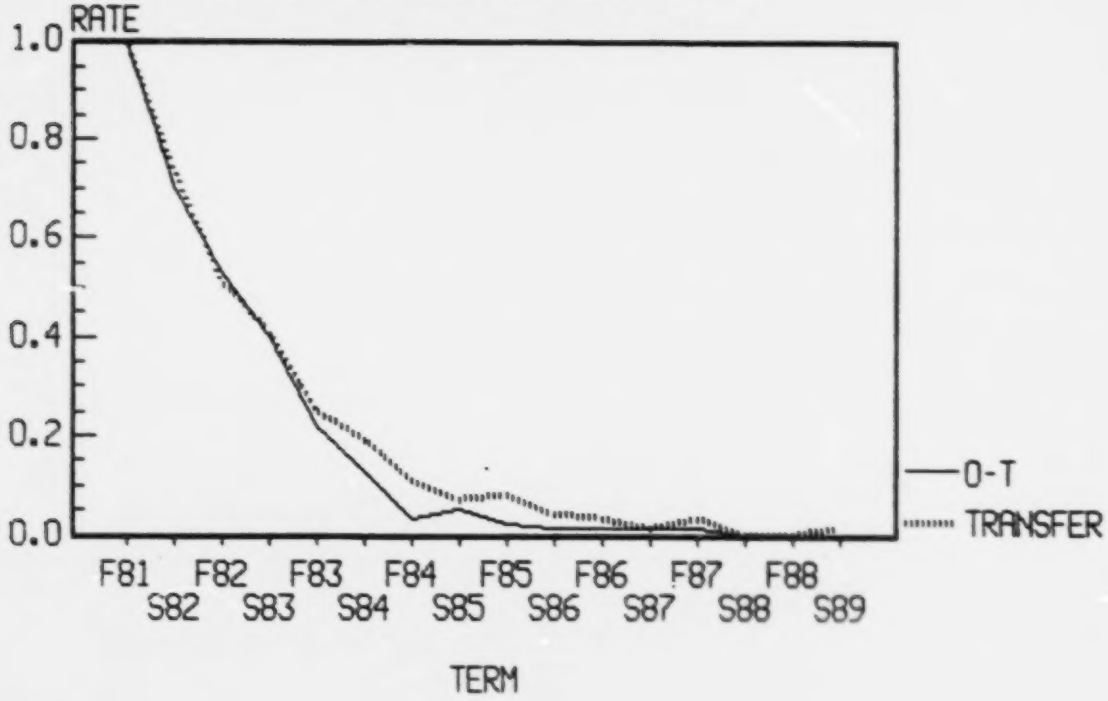
Graph 1
ENROLLMENT RATES
YEAR LEGEND IS FALL COHORT



SEMESTER
SPR +6 & +7 ARE LESS THAN 2.5%

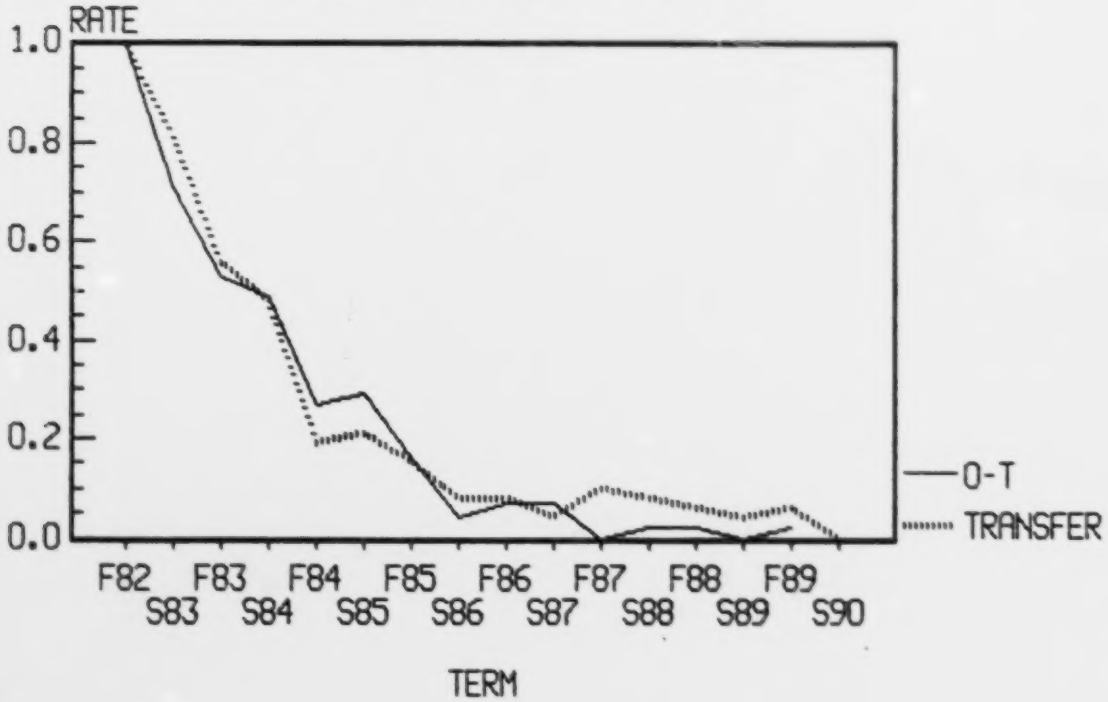
GRAPH 2

PERSISTENCE RATES FOR 1981 COHORT



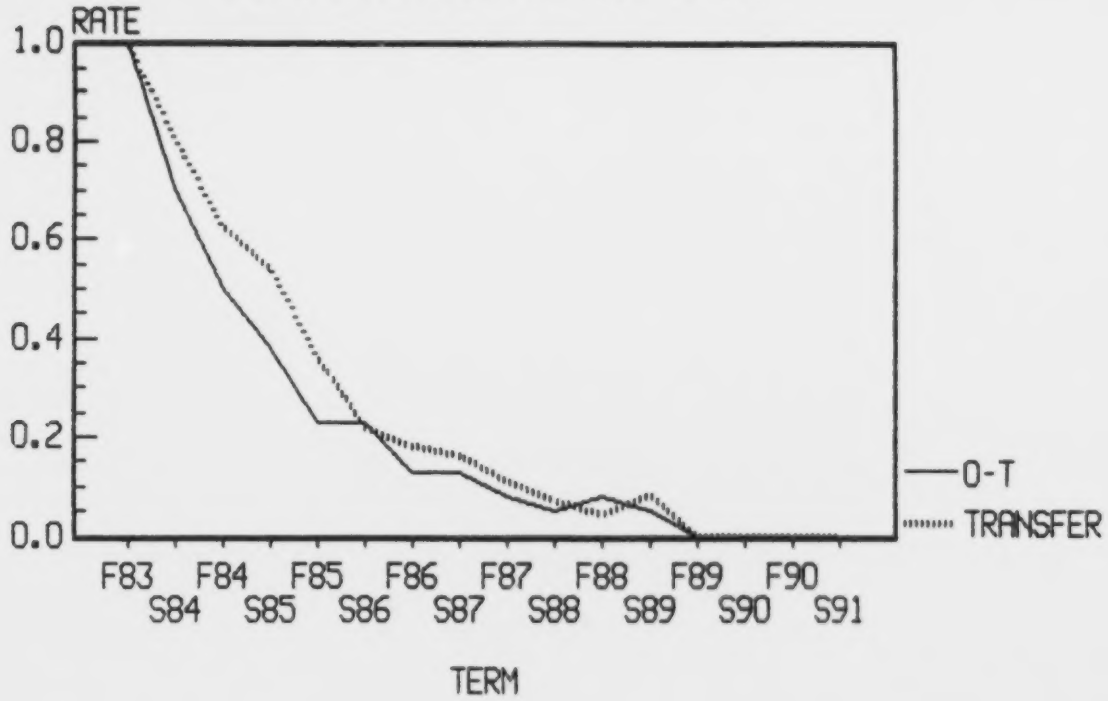
GRAPH 3

PERSISTENCE RATES FOR 1982 COHORT



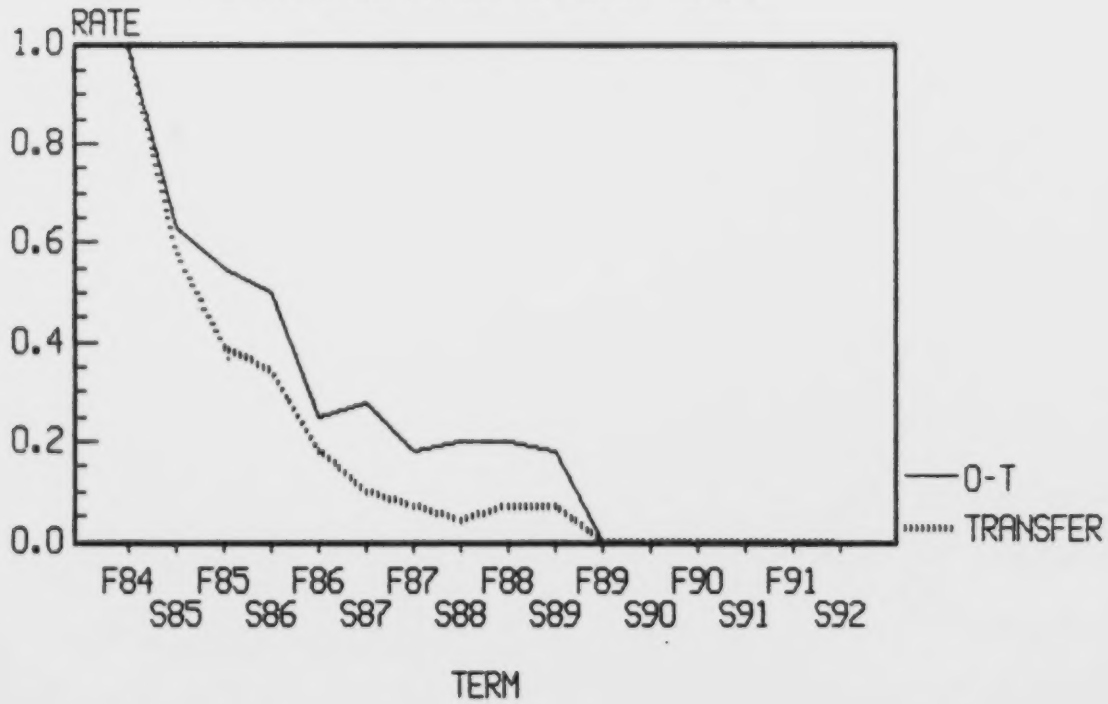
GRAPH 4

PERSISTENCE RATES FOR 1983 COHORT



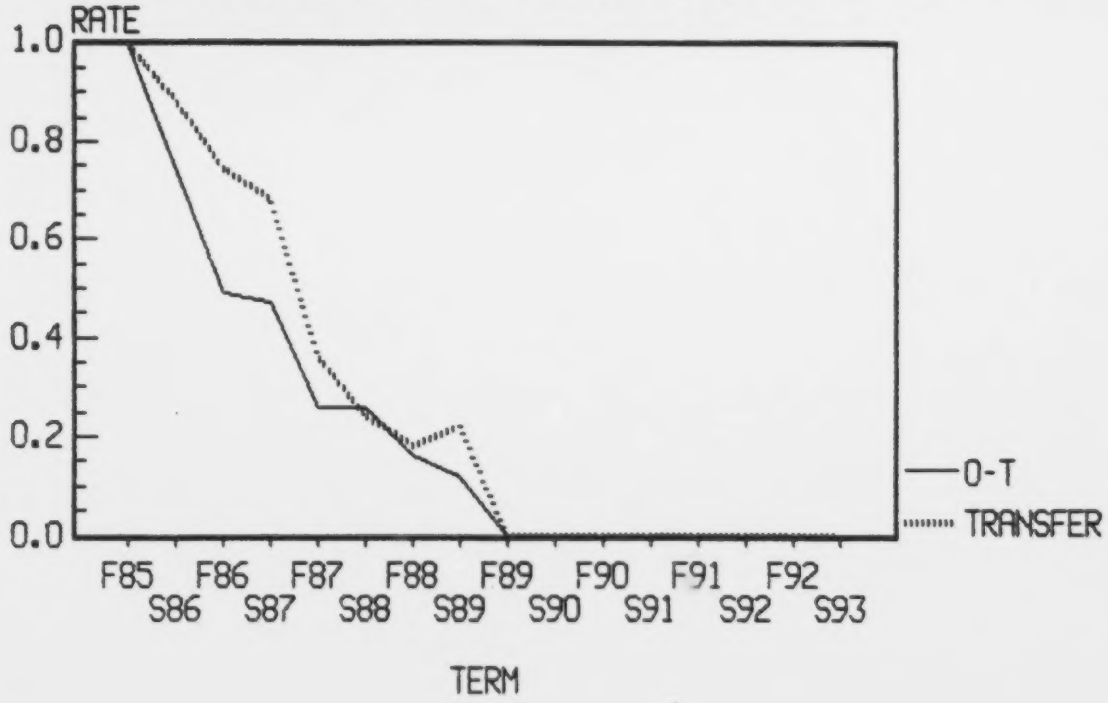
GRAPH 5

PERSISTENCE RATES FOR 1984 COHORT



GRAPH 6

PERSISTENCE RATES FOR 1985 COHORT



GRAPH 7

PERSISTENCE RATES FOR 1986 COHORT

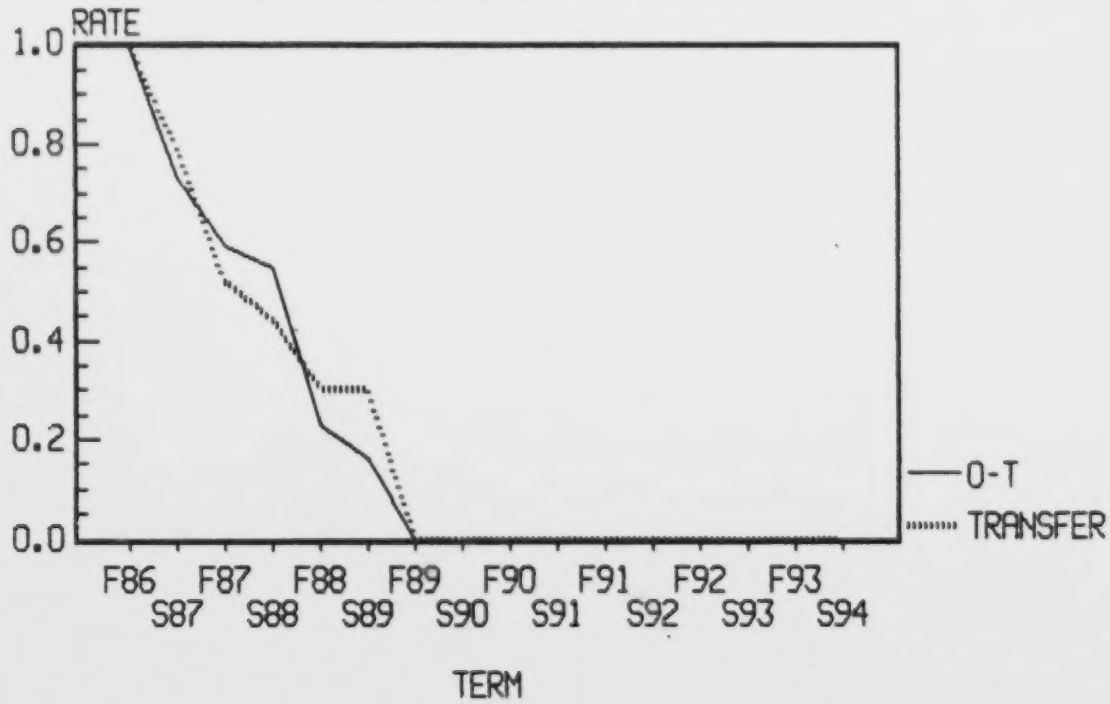


TABLE 1

PERSISTENCE DATA
FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, CURRICULUM-PLACED STUDENTS ONLY
Corresponds to Study Conducted by Dr. Don Puyear for VCCS

	1981	1982	1983 (Fall)	1984	1985	1986	AVERAGE
Total Enrolled:							
Transfer	73	52	74	67	50	73	
O/T	87	45	40	40	43	44	
Total	160	97	114	107	93	117	
Returned in Spring:							
Transfer	53	42	59	39	44	58	
O/T	60	32	28	25	32	32	
Total	113	74	87	64	76	90	
Per Cent	70.63%	76.29%	76.32%	59.81%	81.72%	76.92%	73.61%
Returned Fall +1:							
Transfer	37	29	46	26	37	38	
O/T	46	24	20	22	21	26	
Total	83	53	66	48	58	64	
Per Cent	51.88%	54.64%	57.89%	44.86%	62.37%	54.70%	54.39%
Returned Spring +1:							
Transfer	30	25	40	23	34	32	
O/T	35	22	15	20	20	24	
Total	65	47	55	43	54	56	
Per Cent	40.63%	48.45%	48.25%	40.19%	58.06%	47.86%	47.24%
Returned Fall +2:							
Transfer	18	10	27	12	18	22	
O/T	19	12	9	10	11	10	
Total	37	22	36	22	29	32	
Per Cent	23.13%	22.68%	31.58%	20.56%	31.18%	27.35%	26.08%
Returned Spring +2:							
Transfer	14	11	16	7	12	22	
O/T	11	13	9	11	11	7	
Total	25	24	25	18	23	29	
Per Cent	15.63%	24.74%	21.93%	16.82%	24.73%	24.79%	21.44%
Returned Fall +3:							
Transfer	8	8	13	5	9		
O/T	3	7	5	7	7		
Total	11	15	18	12	16		

TABLE 1

PERSISTENCE DATA
FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, CURRICULUM-PLACED STUDENTS ONLY
Corresponds to Study Conducted by Dr. Don Puyear for VCCS

	1981	1982	1983 (Fall)	1984	1985	1986	AVERAGE
Per Cent	6.88%	15.46%	15.79%	11.21%	17.20%		13.31%
Returned Spring +3:							
Transfer	5	4	12	3	11		
O/T	4	2	5	8	5		
Total	9	6	17	11	16		
Per Cent	5.63%	6.19%	14.91%	10.28%	17.20%		10.84%
Returned Fall +4:							
Transfer	6	4	8	5			
O/T	2	3	3	8			
Total	8	7	11	13			
Per Cent	5.00%	7.22%	9.65%	12.15%			8.50%
Returned Spring +4:							
Transfer	3	2	5	5			
O/T	1	3	2	7			
Total	4	5	7	12			
Per Cent	2.50%	5.15%	6.14%	11.21%			6.25%
Returned Fall +5:							
Transfer	2	5	3				
O/T	1	0	3				
Total	3	5	6				
Per Cent	1.88%	5.15%	5.26%				4.10%
Returned Spring +5:							
Transfer	1	4	6				
O/T	1	1	2				
Total	2	5	8				
Per Cent	1.25%	5.15%	7.02%				4.47%
Returned Fall +6:							
Transfer	2	3					
O/T	1	1					
Total	3	4					
Per Cent	1.88%	4.12%					3.00%
Returned Spring +6:							
Transfer	0	2					

TABLE 1

PERSISTENCE DATA
FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, CURRICULUM-PLACED STUDENTS ONLY
Corresponds to Study Conducted by Dr. Don Puyear for VCCS

	1981	1982	1983 (Fall)	1984	1985	1986	AVERAGE
O/T	0	0					
Total	0	2					
Per Cent	0.00%	2.06%					1.03%
Returned Fall +7:							
Transfer	0	3					
O/T	0	1					
Total	0	4					
Per Cent	0.00%	4.12%					2.06%
Returned Spring +7:							
Transfer	1						
O/T	0						
Total	1						
Per Cent	0.63%						0.63%

File Name: PERSIST

TABLE 2

GRADUATION RATES
FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, CURRICULUM-PLACED STUDENTS ONLY
Corresponds to Study Conducted by Dr. Don Puyear for VCCS

	1981	1982	1983 (Fall)	1984	1985	1986	AVERAGE
Total Enrolled							
Transfer	73	52	74	67	50	73	
O/T	87	45	40	40	43	44	
Total	160	97	114	107	93	117	
Graduates Spring							
Transfer	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Rate	1.37%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
O/T	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Rate	0.00%	4.44%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Total	1	2	0	0	0	0	
Rate	0.63%	2.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.45%
Graduates Spring +1							
Transfer	8	7	6	9	9	5	
Rate	10.96%	13.46%	8.11%	13.43%	18.00%	6.85%	
O/T	12	6	3	10	6	10	
Rate	13.79%	13.33%	7.50%	25.00%	13.95%	22.73%	
Total	20	13	9	19	15	15	
Rate	12.50%	13.40%	7.89%	17.76%	16.13%	12.82%	13.42%
Graduates Spring +2							
Transfer	7	2	5	2	5	9	
Rate	9.59%	3.85%	6.76%	2.99%	10.00%	12.33%	
O/T	10	9	5	4	5	2	
Rate	11.49%	20.00%	12.50%	10.00%	11.63%	4.55%	
Total	17	11	10	6	10	11	
Rate	10.63%	11.34%	8.77%	5.61%	10.75%	9.40%	9.42%
Graduates Spring +3							
Transfer	2	2	8	1	2		
Rate	2.74%	3.85%	10.81%	1.49%	4.00%		
O/T	0	1	2	3	0		
Rate	0.00%	2.22%	5.00%	7.50%	0.00%		
Total	2	3	10	4	2		
Rate	1.25%	3.09%	8.77%	3.74%	2.15%		3.80%

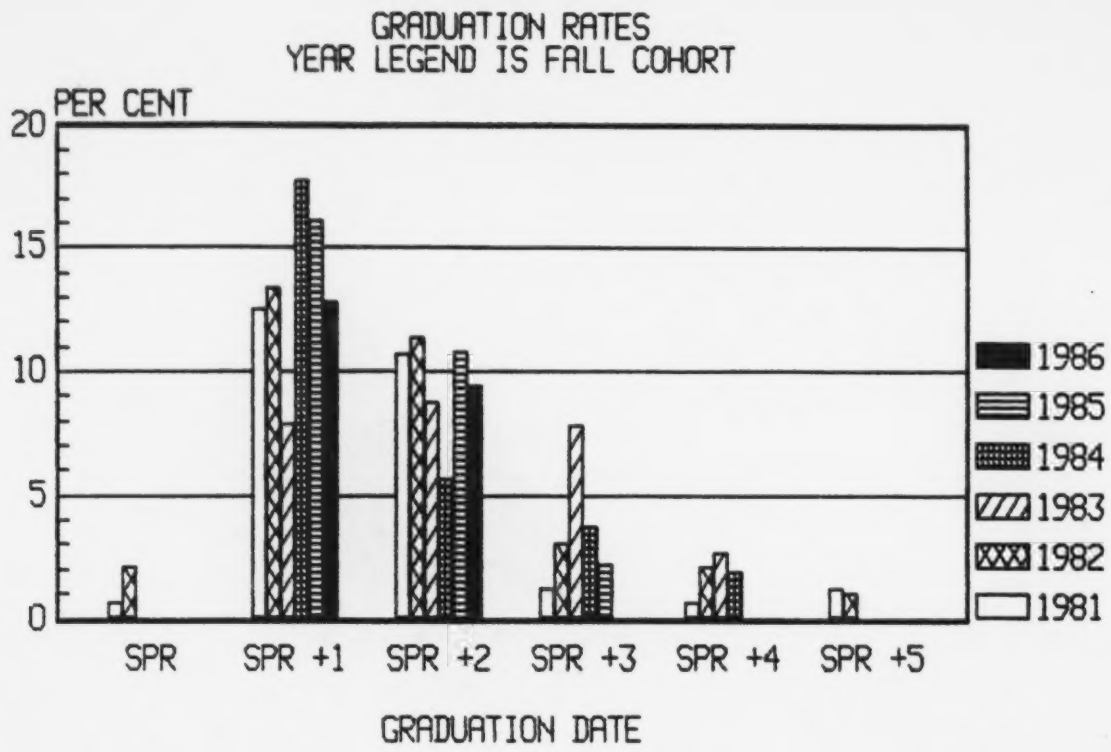
TABLE 2

GRADUATION RATES
FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, CURRICULUM-PLACED STUDENTS ONLY
Corresponds to Study Conducted by Dr. Don Puyear for VCCS

	1981	1982	1983 (Fall)	1984	1985	1986	AVERAGE
Graduates Spring +4							
Transfer	1	1	3	1			
Rate	1.37%	1.92%	4.05%	1.49%			
O/T	0	1	0	1			
Rate	0.00%	2.22%	0.00%	2.50%			
Total	1	2	3	2			
Rate	0.63%	2.06%	2.63%	1.87%			1.80%
Graduates Spring +5							
Transfer	0	1	0				
Rate	0.00%	1.92%	0.00%				
O/T	2	0	0				
Rate	2.30%	0.00%	0.00%				
Total	2	1	0				
Rate	1.25%	1.03%	0.00%				0.76%
Graduates Spring +6							
Transfer	0	0					
Rate							
O/T	0	0					
Rate							
Total							
Rate							
Graduates Spring +7							
Transfer	0						
Rate							
O/T	0						
Rate							
Total							
Rate							

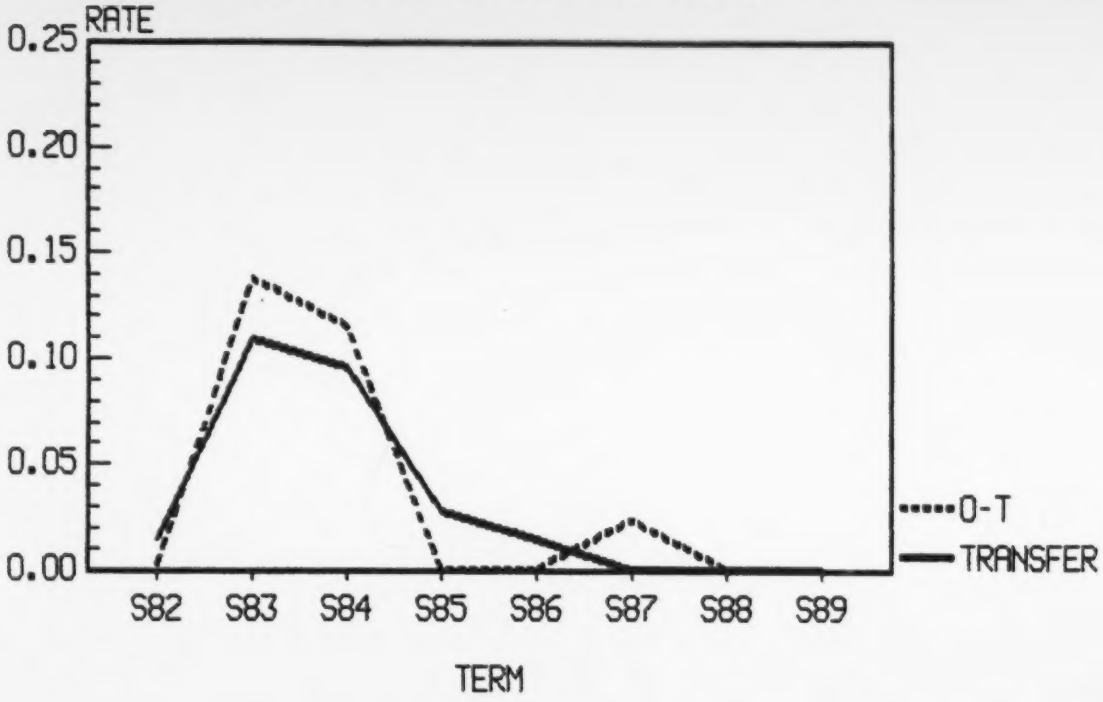
File Name: PERSIST3

GRAPH 8


GRADUATION RATES
YEAR LEGEND IS FALL COHORT
PER CENT
20
15
10
5
0
SPR
SPR +1
SPR +2
SPR +3
SPR +4
SPR +5
GRADUATION DATE
1986
1985
1984
1983
1982
1981

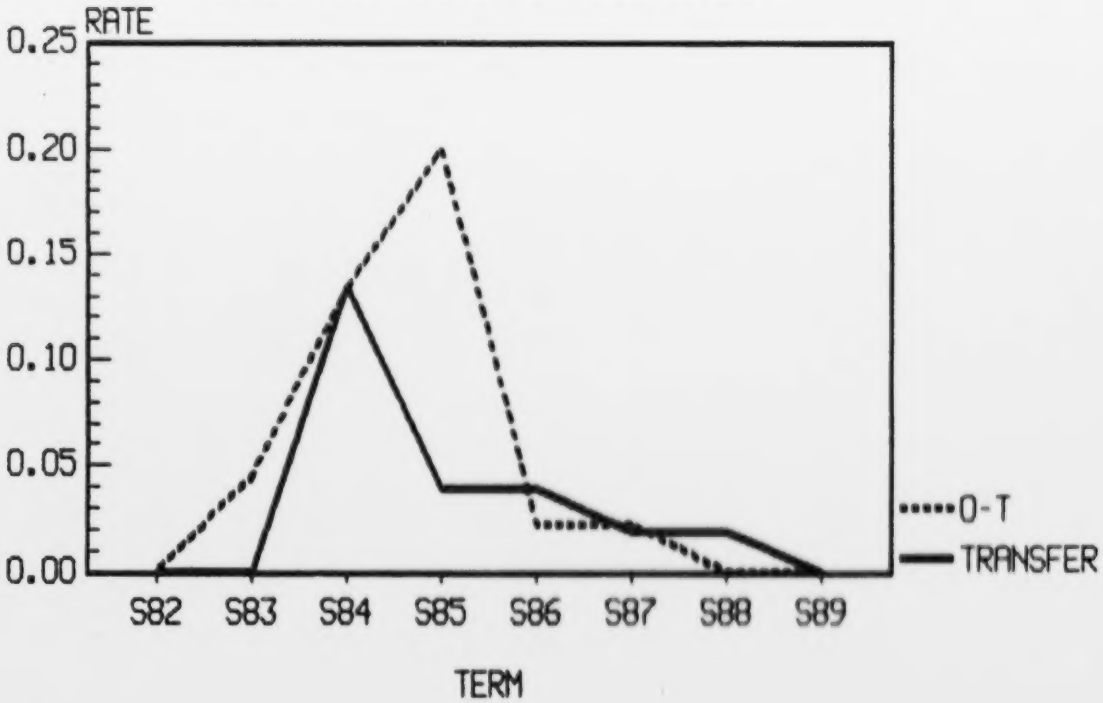
GRAPH 9

GRADUATION RATES FOR 1981 COHORT



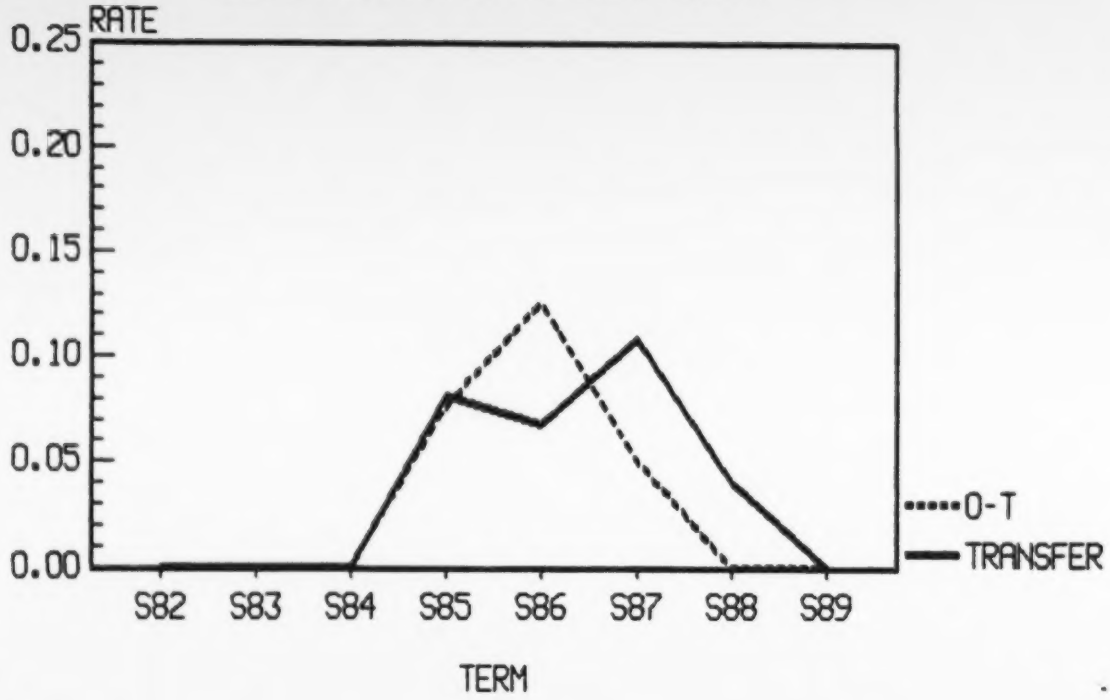
GRAPH 10

GRADUATION RATES FOR 1982 COHORT



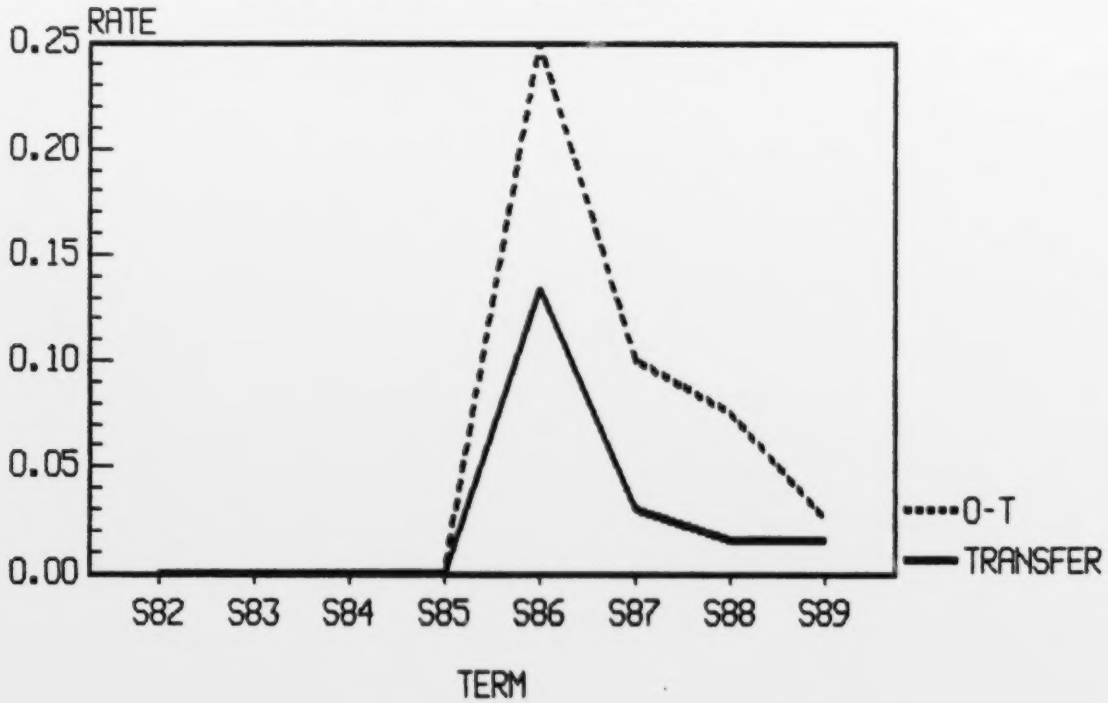
GRAPH 11

GRADUATION RATES FOR 1983 COHORT



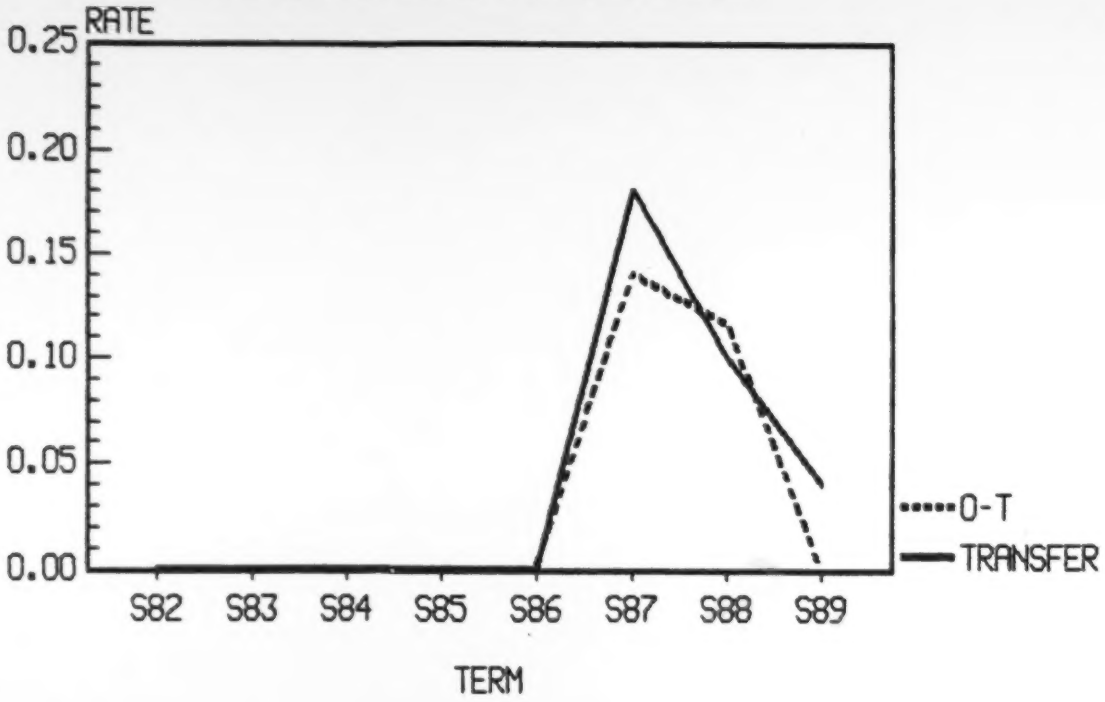
GRAPH 12

GRADUATION RATES FOR 1984 COHORT



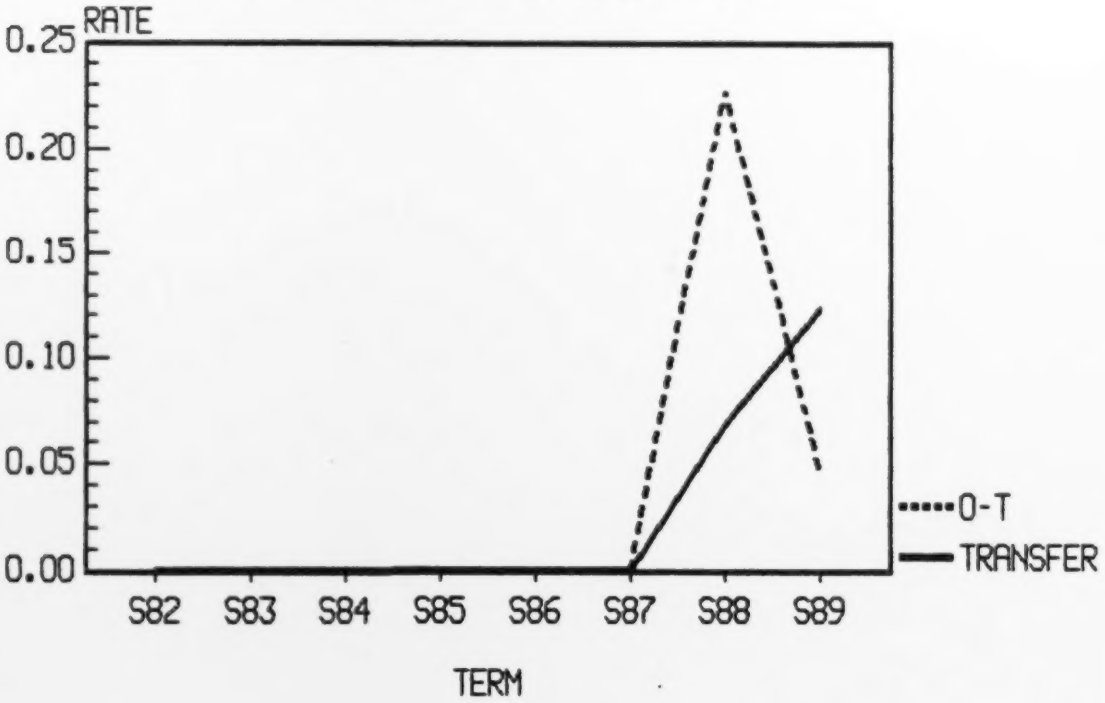
GRAPH 13

GRADUATION RATES FOR 1985 COHORT



GRAPH 14

GRADUATION RATES FOR 1986 COHORT



Graph 15

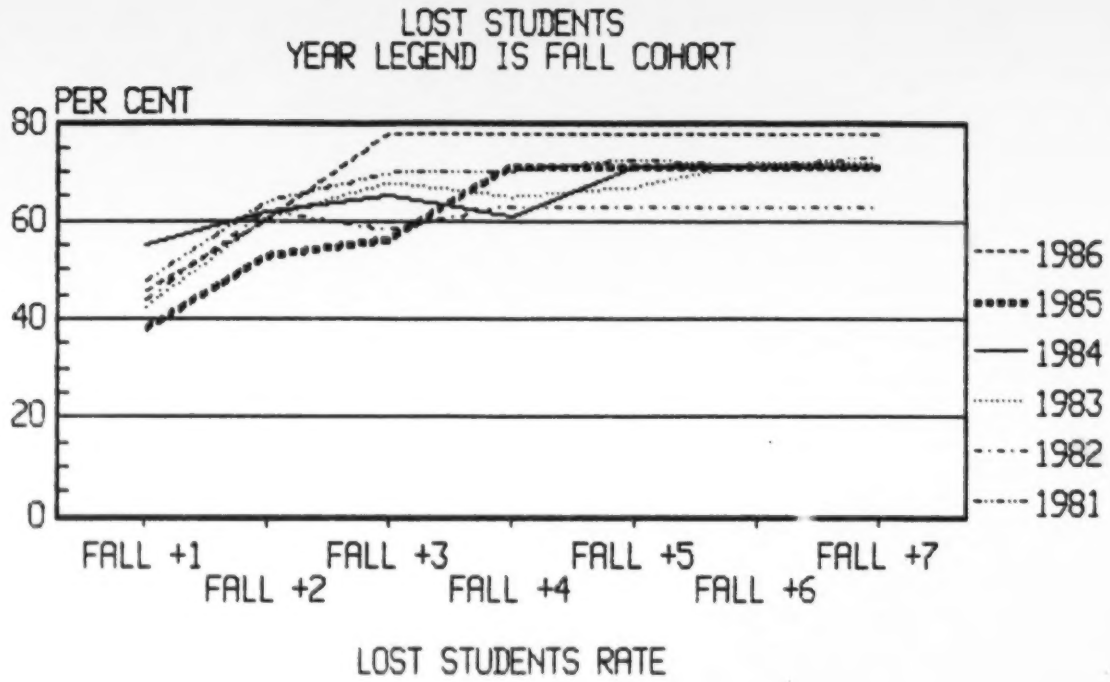

LOST STUDENTS
YEAR LEGEND IS FALL COHORT
PER CENT
80
60
40
20
0
1986
1985
1984
1983
1982
1981
FALL +1
FALL +2
FALL +3
FALL +4
FALL +5
FALL +6
FALL +7
LOST STUDENTS RATE

TABLE 3

RETENTION DATA
FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, CURRICULUM-PLACED STUDENTS ONLY
Corresponds to Study Conducted by Dr. Don Puyear for VCCS

	1981	1982	1983 (Fall)	1984	1985	1986	AVERAGE
Total Enrolled							
Transfer	73	52	74	67	50	73	
O/T	87	45	40	40	43	44	
Total	160	97	114	107	93	117	
Returned Next Fall							
Transfer	37	29	46	26	37	38	
O/T	46	24	20	22	21	26	
Total	83	53	66	48	58	64	
Grads	1	2	0	0	0	0	
Students NOT Lost	84	55	66	48	58	64	
Students Lost	76	42	48	59	35	53	
Per Cent Lost	47.50%	43.30%	42.11%	55.14%	37.63%	45.30%	45.16%
Returned Next Fall							
Transfer	18	10	27	12	18	22	
O/T	19	12	9	10	11	10	
Total	37	22	36	22	29	32	
Grads	20	13	9	19	15	15	
Prior Grads	1	2	0	0	0	0	
Students NOT Lost	58	37	45	41	44	47	
Students Lost	102	60	69	66	49	70	
Per Cent Lost	63.75%	61.86%	60.53%	61.68%	52.69%	59.83%	60.06%
Returned Next Fall							
Transfer	8	8	13	5	9		
O/T	3	7	5	7	7		
Total	11	15	18	12	16	0	
Grads	17	11	10	6	10	11	
Prior grads	21	15	9	19	15	15	
Students NOT Lost	49	41	37	37	41	26	
Students Lost	111	56	77	70	52	91	
Per Cent Lost	69.38%	57.73%	67.54%	65.42%	55.91%	77.78%	65.63%
Returned Next Fall							
Transfer	6	4	8	5			
O/T	2	3	3	8			

TABLE 3

RETENTION DATA
FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, CURRICULUM-PLACED STUDENTS ONLY
Corresponds to Study Conducted by Dr. Don Puyear for VCCS

	1981	1982	1983 (Fall)	1984	1985	1986	AVERAGE
Total	8	7	11	13	0	0	
Grads	2	3	10	4	2	0	
Prior Grads	38	26	19	25	25	26	
Students NOT Lost	48	36	40	42	27	26	
Students Lost	112	61	74	65	66	91	
Per Cent Lost	70.00%	62.89%	64.91%	60.75%	70.97%	77.78%	67.88%
Returned Next Fall							
Transfer	2	5	3				
O/T	1	0	3				
Total	3	5	6	0	0	0	
Grads	1	2	3	2	0	0	
Prior Grads	40	29	29	29	27	26	
Students NOT Lost	44	36	38	31	27	26	
Students Lost	116	61	76	76	66	91	
Per Cent Lost	72.50%	62.89%	66.67%	71.03%	70.97%	77.78%	70.30%
Returned Next Fall							
Transfer	2	3					
O/T	1	1					
Total	3	4	0	0	0	0	
Grads	2	1	0	0	0	0	
Prior Grads	41	31	32	31	27	26	
Students NOT Lost	46	36	32	31	27	26	
Students Lost	114	61	82	76	66	91	
Per Cent Lost	71.25%	62.89%	71.93%	71.03%	70.97%	77.78%	70.97%
Returned Next Fall							
Transfer	0	3					
O/T	0	1					
Total	0	4	0	0	0	0	
Grads	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prior Grads	43	32	32	31	27	26	
Students NOT Lost	43	36	32	31	27	26	
Students Lost	117	61	82	76	66	91	
Per Cent Lost	73.13%	62.89%	71.93%	71.03%	70.97%	77.78%	71.29%

File Name: PERSIST2

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
JUN 21 1990